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UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Radio Service

OFFICE OF INFORMATION

JAN 13

Housekeepers' Chat Tuesday, January 14, 1930.

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NOT FOR PUBLICATION

Subject: "Winter Care of House Plants." Information from W. R. Beattie, Bureau of Plant Industry.

Material available: Mimeographed circular: "Care of House Plants."

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The other morning I made an early call on W. R. B., my friend the Garden Adviser. His dining room was bright and cheerful, and how could it be anything else? There was a lovely blooming begonia, two bright geranium blossoms, and a fern pan filled with daffodils in full bloom.

"I'm surprised," I said "to find daffodils blooming in the house, so early in the winter. I thought daffodils bloomed around Easter time."

"They do," said W.R.B. "Under ordinary conditions, daffodils do not bloom until Easter, or later, but I planted these bulbs in the flat fern pans, quite early, stored them on the north side of the garage, and covered them thoroughly with sifted coal ashes. Sand would have done just as well. About the middle of December, I brought three or four of the pans containing the bulbs into the house. First, I placed them in the cool cellar for a few days, then brought them into a cool room and gradually warmed them up until they began to grow. Then I placed them in the south window of the dining room. Now, as you see, I have 'a host of golden daffodils.'"

"They're lovely," I said. "Do you have enough bulbs coming on, so that you'll have blossoms till spring?"

"Exactly so," said W.R.B. "In fact, here's one I brought in several days ago. It's growing nicely. You see there are five bulbs in each of the fern pans, which means that I will have four, and possibly five or six nice flowers in about two weeks. I have two more pans in the cellar now. Those still buried in the ashes on the north side of the garage are well-covered with straw, so that I can get at them, and bring additional pans into the house as I want them for blossoming."

"What will you do with the bulbs after they finish blossoming?" I asked.

"Keep them watered and growing for some time after they bloom, then at the first opportunity I will take them out of the pans, soil and all, and plant them in the ground outdoors where they may remain until the bulbs are fully matured, or perhaps they will be left just where I plant them, and will give outdoor blooms another year. I can do this here in our mild climate, but it would not be satisfactory in the extreme northern part of the country where it becomes very cold.

"This geranium," he continued, "was growing in my flower border last summer. It was so pretty that I couldn't bear to see Jack Frost get it, so I lifted it with a large ball of earth attached to its roots, and planted it in this 8-inch flower pot. I broke off some of the largest shoots, and kept it watered and shaded for several days, until it became used to its new home, then when the weather grew colder, I brought the geranium into the house and gave it the sunniest spot that I could find."

"Do you have to water it much?" I asked.

"No," he replied. "Geraniums do not want too much water; you see it is growing in a mixture of garden loam and sand, the type of soil that will not easily water-log, but my plan is to inspect my plants every day, and water them as needed, but not too much at any one time. As the sunshine increases and the weather becomes warmer, the plants will require more water. As a rule, when you lift geraniums from the garden, and bring them into the house, they shed most of their leaves, but I have been quite successful with this plant and it did not lose any more leaves than it would in the course of its natural growth. Pretty soon I will take some cuttings from this geranium and start a number of new plants for my flower border next season."

"What kind of begonia plant is that?" was my next question.

"A Rex begonia," said the Garden Adviser. It is rather tender, and does not bloom very well. However, it is worth growing, because the leaves are so ornamental and highly colored. This begonia is known as Gloire de Lorraine and is especially fine for use as a house plant, because it blooms and blooms all through the winter. It is what is called a semi-tuberous-rooted begonia. Another good begonia of this class is known as Gloire of Cincinnati."

"It certainly does blossom, I thought when I looked at it that it was a bouquet of flowers, instead of a plant growing in a flower pot. I must have one for my dining room. Doesn't it make a nice centerpiece for the table?"

"Yes indeed," said W.R.B. "You can get a small plant that will stand in a jardiniere, or in a small dish in the center of the table. By keeping the plant in the sunshine most of the time, it will continue to bloom nearly the whole winter. There are a number of good winter blooming begonias, some of which grow to considerable size and have highly colored stems and leaves."

"Are there any bulbs besides daffodils that bloom well in the house?" I asked.

"Yes indeed," said W.R.B. "One of my friends is raising Easter lilies -- growing the plants from seed, and has them blooming 15 months after the seed is planted. Only the other day he had some beautiful plants with 12 or 14 blossoms and buds on each of them."

"How about hyacinths, for winter blooming?" I asked.

"Handle them in very much the same way as you do daffodils," said W.R.B. Plant the bulbs in pots. Store the pots outdoors, with a covering of sand or ashes, until you bring them into the house for blooming. I am saving my hyacinths until a little later, because I want them to form plenty of roots before I bring them into the house. It really is very interesting to watch these bulbs develop, when you bring them in out of the cold. Remember that they should be brought in gradually, and not changed directly from the cold to a high temperature, and don't forget that they want water fairly often, but not too much at a time."

I thanked W.R.B. for his information, and told him that all questions about houseplants would be referred to him. Are there any questions? If so, send them to me, and I'll see that they are answered.

Please be prepared to write a menu tomorrow -- a very good one for children, and for children's parents.

Wednesday: "Has Your Child a Home?"